

SUPPORT LABOR'S FIGHT AGAINST The Newark News

Full Story Inside



MAKING NEWS — Members of North Jersey Newspaper Guild picket Newark News plant in Market Street in fight to win a decent contract and save jobs.

**COME TO THE AFL-CIO RALLY
Thursday-August 5-12 Noon
In Front of The News Building,
215 Market St., Newark, N.J.**

News Workers Waging A Seige In The Streets For Jobs and Justice

For 10 weeks a determined group of editorial employees of The Newark News, ranging from reporters to photographers to library clerks, have been walking a picket line on the concrete sidewalks of Newark's Market Street.

A year ago, many of these strikers would not have believed they would be walking a picket line.

Why? What is it that has brought together this disparate group of editorial employees? What is it that has made them wait distances equivalent to crossing the country four or five times? What has caused these people to endure loss of pay for weeks and months?

And, why has the strike been so successful? Why have these editorial employees been able to shut down a newspaper for 10 weeks? What is it about this strike that has gained the support of unions throughout New Jersey?

To answer these and other questions we have to go back, past May 26 when the strike began, past Feb. 19 when editorial workers voted overwhelmingly for the Guild, back past last October when a small group of reporters and photographers took the first tentative steps toward unionism.

We have to go back two, five, ten, twenty, even forty years — to those days in the era of paternalism on the Newark News when many, many non-union employees exchanged a living wage and standard fringe benefits for what they had been led to "understand" was job security, a job for life. We have to go back to those days when editorial employees weren't paid very much, but with lenient overtime and expenses they could get by. And, the job was always there no matter the length of the illness.

It was in those not-too-distant days of paternalism, when the Scudder family owned the Newark News, that the seeds of the strike were planted. It was in the era of the first big union "understanding" between the private department business employees and employers that the seeds took root.

STRIKE TAKES ROOT

But, it was not until the last year or so — under a new owner and a new regime — that the roots of the strike took hold. And, it wasn't until the new owners made clear their intentions with the Newark News that the strike blossomed.

You see, writers and photographers and editors at the Newark News, although underpaid and mistreated for years, could at least take pride in the product. The Newark News until the last year or so was without question the finest newspaper in New Jersey, and one of the finest in the country.

But, in the last year with the acquisition of the News by the profit-incentive firm of Media General of Richmond, Va. the swell of pride in the product began to deflate. The Newark News no longer was the property of a long established New Jersey family; it was little more than the black ink and ink of an accountant's ledger in Richmond.

As news of the sale of the paper swept through the city in early 1970, the "understanding" and the "deal" that had kept a staff of 250 pacified for years began to fall away. New owners simply meant that the promises of the old were no more.

The Story Behind The Strike

Many, many editorial employees recognized that they not only had never had good salaries or fringe benefits, but that they no longer had a product to be proud of or a secure future either. The era of paternalism ended quickly. The promises of Bruce Muir, the new president of The News, that the old policies of the paper would continue echoed unconvincingly through the City Room.

In October a dozen or so reporters and photographers took the first positive step towards organizing a union when they met in New York with Miss Edna Berger, an international representative of the American Newspaper Guild. The commitment to organize the Guild was made.

GUILD WINS ELECTION

The time flew in the ensuing weeks. In eight weeks, the Guild secured enough signatures from editorial employees at The News not only to call for the election but win it. Eight weeks after filing for an election, in mid February, the Guild won the most astounding victory in nearly 30 years. Editorial employees voted 151 to 50 for Guild representation at the bargaining table.

During the campaign prior to the election a few interesting things took place. Bruce Muir, president of The News, said on several occasions that he saw no need to reduce the staff of the paper. He said on several occasions that the paper was in the black financially and that everything was fine.

Negotiations between the newly-elected Guild and the company started on March 25, more than a month after the election. In the intervening time, the company declared suddenly that it had lost a great deal of money in 1970 and was losing more in early 1971. It slashed the overtime and expenses that the vast majority of employees depended on to survive. The company started comparing itself to the Star Ledger, Newark's morning newspaper. Just three days after the election, the company began firing people — dedicated employees whose only fault, it turned out, was that they weren't unionized.

Now, in one year, editorial employees had lost almost everything. A year before they had a wage, which was enough to get by with overtime and expenses thrown in. Now, their paychecks were not enough. A year ago editorial employees had a sense of security in their job. Now, with the management comparing the News to the Ledger where the editorial department is only one third as large, they lost all sense of job security. A year ago, they had pride in the product. Now, they could see it slipping fast in quality. It was no wonder that the Ledger took over as the number one paper in circulation in the state in the last quarter of 1970.



COUNTING THE DAYS — Pickets keep record of lengthening Newark News strike.

In the election for the Guild, newsmen employees of The News had served notice on the new owners — both in Newark and Richmond — that they wanted dignity and prosperity. They wanted no more "deals" or "understandings." They wanted change.

This hope for change for the better was carried into the first negotiation session between the Guild and company, held on March 25 in the Downtown Motor Inn in Newark. The hope for change — and the hope that the company would deal with its employees reasonably — continued for several sessions. But, it was dashed when the company made its first offer.

"INSULTING" WAGE OFFER

The offer provided for minimum wages well below the average of newspapers of size comparable to the Newark News, and a figure which was below what most reporters and photographers would have been making if overtime and expenses had not been slashed. In short, the company was offering no money at all.

"Insulting," was the one word response of Miss Berger, the negotiator for the Guild. It was insulting for a number of reasons. Not only were editorial employees told they were worth next to nothing in the eyes of the company, but were told that some were worthy than others.

The company proposed that reporters earn more than photographers, a condition that is prohibited in virtually every Guild contract in the nation. Photographers and reporters have parity as a matter of course in all Guild contracts. The management of the Newark News knew this, but proposed differences anyway.

The company also proposed that some reporters be paid less than others, not on the basis of experience, talent, or longevity, but only on the basis of geography, on the basis of in what office or department an individual worked. It became clear that the company had nothing but contempt for its employees, and was willing to subject them to insult after insult and degradation after degradation to save a few dollars. Any hopes that remained for an equitable and honorable settlement were dashed in these negotiation sessions.

In early May, the membership of the Newark News Guild twice voted unanimously — with more than 100 members present each time — to empower the 12-member negotiating committee to call a strike.

Their demonstration of unity and solidarity in the face of a strike must have been heard by the company, for on May 25 the company negotiators sweetened the offer a

little, but did not come close to the needs of the Guild. The union dropped its demands considerably, going more than halfway to the company position.

86 DISMISSALS SOUGHT

But, the company continued to insist that photographers be paid less than reporters. And, finally, the company dropped the other shoe. It demanded the right to fire up to 50 persons for what it claimed were economic reasons. But, it wouldn't allow the Guild any right to review the economic reasons.

Fifty jobs represented about a fourth of the staff. On the eve of a strike, the company had come in with an incredible demand for 50 jobs. There was little else the Guild could do.

At 5 a.m., May 26, a Wednesday, more than 100 editorial employees — some with more than 40 or 45 years of experience — gathered in front of the News building in Market Street. The strike was on.

Bruce Muir had announced that The News intended to publish despite the strike, but was prevented from doing so by the effectiveness of the strike.

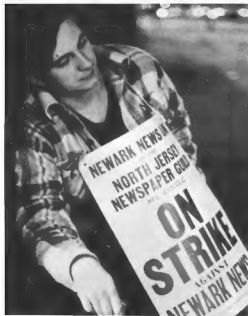
Two days after the strike began the company and union met in the Robert Trent Hotel, the scene of most negotiation sessions. The company pulled a number of offers off the table, including a job security clause, a union shop and severance pay for dismissed workers.

In the ensuing weeks of the strike, negotiators for the Guild and the company have met on more than a dozen occasions. The Guild has dropped its demands considerably in these sessions. The company has not changed its position a bit.

This refusal of the company to budge on its unreasonable proposals — even to go back to the position it held before the strike — has led the Guild to conclude that The News has no intention of settling with the Guild, that it wants nothing less than to bust the Guild once and for all. And, this is why the strike goes on. This is why the State AFL-CIO has become involved. This is why there will be a rally Thursday in front of the plant.

The 170 members of the Newark News Guild are in a fight for their jobs. But, they also are in a struggle for a better newspaper. And, they are in a struggle for unionism. For once and for all, the dangerous notion of union busting at the Newark News or anywhere in New Jersey must be stopped. It will be stopped!

MEDIA MONSTER FROM THE SOUTH



LONELY VIGIL — A Newark News artist mans the picket line during work hours. Picketing has been continuous since May 26.

STRIKE FACTS

Here are the basic elements of The Newark News strikes:

- **WHO** — 165 members of the North Jersey Newspaper Guild, Local 173, AFL-CIO.
- **WHAT** — A walkout by editorial workers, affecting members of seven craft unions.
- **WHEN** — From May 26 until a settlement is made.
- **WHERE** — At The News Building, 215 Market Street, Newark.
- **WHY** — To obtain a contract that will provide reasonable salaries, protection against layoffs, a union shop and severance pay for dismissed workers.

The Newark News doesn't belong to Newark any more. In fact, it doesn't even belong to New Jersey.

Since May 1970 the largest evening newspaper in the state has been owned by Media General, Inc., a multi-million dollar corporation based in Richmond and controlled by Southern businessmen.

Media General owns six other papers — all in the South — television and radio stations, and newspaper mills. In these facilities, the company has gained a reputation for doing two things:

- Making money.
- Busting unions.

Last year Media General piled up record profits of \$6.3 million. Fortune Magazine says it's one of the fastest growing corporations in the country.

But Media General says it can't afford to spend additional money in Newark. In fact, the company says it has to cut the content of the paper and lay off many workers just to make ends meet in Newark.

In Newark as in Richmond, Media General is trying to starve out its faithful workers in an effort to fatten its profits. And the only protection against the executive axe is the trade unions.

The Newark News never had a major strike before this year. Neither did the Media General papers in Richmond. But now there are strikes in both cities.

In Richmond more than 150 union printers went on strike March 31 in a dispute over wages and job security. They are still out — but the Richmond papers are being published every day.

In Richmond the company hired strike-breakers for \$100 a week to replace the union printers. There is little hope for an early settlement.

In Newark more than 160 reporters, photographers and other editorial workers went on strike May 26 in a dispute over wages and job security. They are still out — but the situation here is far different than in Richmond.

In Newark, in spite of attempts by the company to divide and conquer the unions, the paper has not been able to publish. There is hope the unions can win the strike and save their jobs.

But Media General's leaders can't understand why their plantation philosophy can't prevail in Newark. They can't understand why a Virginia-style right-to-work law isn't enacted in New Jersey.

But then, Media General's leaders can't understand their only Northern newspaper. These leaders don't know — or care about — Newark and New Jersey. They seldom come here. Their hearts are where their treasure is — in the banks of Richmond.

Media General has sent a lot of imported executives, mostly from Philadelphia, to try to run The Newark News. These carpetbaggers have added \$500,000 worth of new jobs to the payroll here — all at the top.

These executives haven't been able to improve The News — as a newspaper or as a business. They've tried to decimate the staff, thus touching off the worst labor turmoil in the paper's 85-year history.

These executives have also managed to turn past profits into mounting losses. And who do they ask to pay the price? The very workers who have made The News a distinguished paper.

Media General's purpose here is clear: To turn the News into a cheap shell of its old self — a proud old label on a nearly empty package.

As evidence, just consider all the reports that Media General has been considering a deal to merge its Sunday paper with the Star-Ledger. This could be the first step toward a newspaper monopoly here for S. I. Newhouse, the chain czar.

Would Media General ever enter into a deal with Newhouse? Why not? The Virginia gentlemen who control the Newark News aren't interested in quality newspapers. The only reading matter that interests them are bank balance sheets.

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